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WHY A CAPABILITY FOR DEFENSE OF THE ATLANTIC SEA LANE MAY BE NECESSARY--

I. Combat

The conventional wisdom is that a prolonged conventional war in Europe is unlikely because:

- the conflict will go nuclear
- or
- we will lose rapidly
- or
- we and our allies don't have the supplies to fight for more than a few weeks

Therefore, a prolonged resupply requirement is unlikely

But:

- Much the same judgment was prevalent for different reasons in 1914 and in 1939, yet control of the Atlantic was perhaps the most critical factor in the wars that ensued.
- We are in a period of military technology in which the defense is coming into the ascendancy, e.g., small, portable anti-tank weapons. Therefore, a military stalemate on the ground in W. Europe is conceivable.
- There is no evidence that the Warsaw Pact's stockage levels of war supplies is any better than NATO's.

II. Peacetime

The impression of whether the US can or cannot resupply Europe during war, as in the past two World Wars can have an important impact on the attitude of our NATO allies as to the degree of their exposure to risk.